

OGC 70-0788

15 May 1970



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Dear

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Mr. Helms has asked me to respond to your thoughtful letter of May 9, 1970.

Despite what you have been told by your representatives in the Congress, I still believe that the most efficient way for an individual citizen to express his views is through the vote. In this connection, let me explain a bit about the function of this Agency. As you probably know, our primary duty is to furnish foreign intelligence information and estimates on foreign developments to the policymakers of Government. We are specifically prohibited from any internal-security activities and consequently are not directly involved in domestic matters. All of us who make up the staff of the Agency are, of course, personally concerned with the serious problems confronting our country, both domestic and foreign, but in view of its basic role, the Agency as such can have little impact on the domestic side. Obviously, intelligence contributes to the formulation of policy, but if we are to maintain our standards of objectivity we cannot and should not play a decisive role.

The Government is made up of many components, each with its particular statutory responsibilities and limitations on those responsibilities, and that is why I feel, as I said in opening, that the private citizen's best chance of influencing the course of Government is through his elective representatives in the Congress.

Sincerely,

s/

cc: Asst to DCI-Mr. Goodwin
ER w/basic via O/DCI
✓Legislative Counsel
General Counsel
Lawrence R. Houston
General Counsel

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May 9, 1970

Mr. Richard Helms, Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. Helms:

I am writing to you because I have been told directly by my elected representatives in Congress that they are no more able to influence government decisions than I at this critical time.

This being the case, I am turning to you, who do influence these decisions, to beg you to recognize the seriousness of the crisis we all face. As a non-radical fifty year old woman in constant and close contact with young people, I fear that those in power sadly misunderstand the response of the younger generation to government policy toward communism, at home or abroad. They simply do not believe that there is any threat to the United States which compares to our threat to ourselves through our use of our resources in Southeast Asia; our monstrous ICBM, ABM and MIRV "defense" system; our oppression of minorities, the poor and women at home; our manipulation of foreign policy in protection of corporate interests; and our headlong technological global suicide through pollution of our continent.

Up to the present time, the unrest of young people has manifested itself in a rather romantic imitation of revolutionary rhetoric and some violence. Nationwide, the costs have been light---a few bombed buildings, a lot of broken glass and a great deal of law enforcement expenses.

I think that policy makers are naively underestimating both the intelligence and the technical skills of these young people. I also believe that policy makers like yourself assume that their unrest can be contained through ordinary methods of law enforcement. You therefore continue to put off their priorities for those which obcess your generation.

You are wrong. Each new affront to their aims, such as the Cambodian adventure, radicalizes hundreds more, adding to their collective skills and determination. They have a collective understanding of the technology of our highly interdependent industrial, communication and transportation structure. If they finally give up all hope for improvement of our institutions, they can and will stop those institutions.


I do not speak from any intimate knowledge of plans but rather from understanding of their training, their skills and their sources of information through their jobs.

More and more, they believe that they have nothing to lose--- that they will die from the war or police action or pollution soon anyway. Present government policies are convincing them that they have no future. Such predictions by a desperate generation are very likely to be self-fulfilling.

I am perhaps overly optimistic, but I still believe that a total reorientation of national resources away from war and weapons and repression toward solving pollution, racism and poverty might still be able to save us from our young. Without it, I do not believe anything can stop them from a highly sophisticated disruption which will result in a collapse of our economic and political structure.

I would appreciate an answer to this letter from you.

Sincerely yours



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